

States. Despite a difficult fiscal situation, Costa Rica is projected to increase its investment in security by 20 percent in 2017. I commend the Obama administration's decision to donate two Island-class cutters to the Costa Rican Coast Guard, which will greatly boost Costa Rica's capacity to combat the narcotics trade. This also serves as a reminder of the strategic value of the State Department's security cooperation at a time when the Trump administration is proposing shortsighted cuts to our foreign assistance budget.

Additionally, I want to call attention to Costa Rica's collaboration with the United States in addressing the humanitarian challenges related to individuals fleeing violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Between 2013 and 2016, the number of migrants from these three countries who have requested asylum in Costa Rica more than quadrupled, a dramatic increase that reflects the urgency of the situation in Central America. In a clear demonstration of President Solis's leadership on these issues, Costa Rica and the United States signed an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, to establish a relocation and processing facility in Costa Rica for up to 200 at-risk migrants at a time from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. This critical screening provides immediate protection for those most vulnerable and opens opportunities for these individuals to be relocated to third countries.

Our joint agreement with UNHCR is but one example of U.S. and Costa Rican collaboration at multilateral fora. Costa Rica has consistently voted with the United States at the United Nations on critical issues related to Syria, North Korea, and Ukraine. In the past year, Costa Rica has also used its voice and vote at the Organization of American States to express concern about the growing challenges to democracy and human rights in Venezuela.

Furthermore, in August 2016, Costa Rica's commitment to human rights was on display when it became the first country to ratify the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance—an important step toward a more just and egalitarian society within the Americas. The convention reinforces international standards on all forms of discrimination, reaffirms the commitment of member states of the OAS to the complete and unconditional eradication of racism, and takes a step forward in the legal definition of contemporary forms of racism.

As a champion of environmental stewardship, Costa Rica has made great strides to develop renewable energy. Costa Rica recently set an ambitious carbon neutrality goal for 2021 and is well positioned to achieve this important objective. The country recently ran 75 days straight on renewable power, and, with continued foreign

investment and U.S. diplomatic assistance, Costa Rica is on its way to becoming a carbon-neutral nation. I am hopeful that our diplomatic mission to Costa Rica will continue to support the country's interest in being a leader in the fight against climate change. Helping Costa Rica realize innovations in its power sector helps foster a broader strategic partnership with an important neighbor in our hemisphere.

At a moment characterized by the Trump administration's isolationist rhetoric, it is critically important to recognize that the United States is safer when we cooperate with other countries in the region to fight the battle against organized crime and illegal drug-trafficking. At the same time, Costa Rica's cooperation with the United Nations to support orderly and lawful migration, its collaboration with its neighbors in the region, and its efforts to promote human rights regionally are worthy of our commendation. Costa Rica is a true partner of the United States, and it is imperative that we continue to strengthen and expand the cooperation between our two countries to promote more security, prosperity, and stability in Central America and across the hemisphere.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA VACHON

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Barbara Vachon, who retired this March after 16 years of service to the Senate. For as long as I have been in the Senate, with just a 2-month exception, Barb has served as my executive assistant and my right hand.

Barb's service to the Senate began in 2001, when her friend Trecia called and offered her a temporary position in Senator Jim Jeffords' office. In New Hampshire at the time, Barb decided she would take a chance and try out life in Washington, DC. Barb thought she was coming down to Washington for a 2-month assignment, answering phones and staffing the front office until the office could hire someone right out of college, but Barb quickly became an invaluable member of Senator Jeffords' team. Eventually, she became the Senator's executive assistant, working alongside him every day until his retirement from the Senate in 2007.

Barb's first year in the Senate included Senator Jeffords switching parties, 9/11, and the anthrax and ricin scares. Any one of these events might have given a different person a reason to leave the Senate, but Barb stayed and worked as hard as ever. When Senator Jeffords retired in 2007, Barb helped Senator BERNIE SANDERS' office learn the ways of the Senate for 2 months, after which she joined my office.

From day 1, Barb was always the person who made the trains run on time in my office. Barb had the challenging and sometimes impossible task of keeping my day on schedule, while at the same time juggling phone calls, personal notes, briefing memos, and

any number of inquiries that came across her desk. There were even a few times where she managed to track down particularly old and rare library books at my request. No matter the task at hand, Barb approached her work with good humor and a can-do attitude that impressed everyone.

Barb's contributions in my Senate office are immeasurable, but I thought it was worth trying to quantify some of the ways in which she has served the people of Pennsylvania and our Nation. During her decade of service to Pennsylvania, Barb welcomed more than 200 ambassadors, dignitaries, and administration officials to my office, drafted more than 500 letters, and greeted over 1,000 Pennsylvanians at my "Keystone Coffees." She acted as a mentor and support system for all my staff members, and befriended everyone she worked with in the Senate. Everyone, from the Capitol Police officers she passed on her 3-block commute, to the photographers in the Senate Photo Studio who patiently waited while Barb shepherded our constituents for photos, knows how valued Barb was to our team and to me personally.

Having been in the Senate long before I was, Barb understood how to balance the everyday needs in the office with the overall goals we set for ourselves when we first began our service here. Barb provided everyone in my office, myself included, with the important perspective that is often lost here in the Senate: it is easy to get bogged down in details or small problems, but the work we do here is important, lasting, and honorable. Barb never lost sight of how fortunate we are to work in this institution, and I know our team is grateful to have always had that reminder.

It is hard to imagine my office without Barb, but I know she will enjoy her retirement, whether she is home in New Hampshire or traveling the world. I wish her and her children, Heather and Michael, well in this new chapter.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LESLIE CARTNER

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Leslie Cartner, commander of the Yellowstone Battalion of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps in Billings. Leslie's devotion to the Yellowstone Battalion, the only Sea Cadet organization in the State of Montana, has been outstanding. In the next few weeks, Leslie will complete her tenure as Yellowstone Battalion Commander and transfer responsibility for the Sea Cadet program to another capable Montanan.

In 1962, Congress chartered the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. Today there are over 380 Sea Cadet units and nearly 9,000 young Americans participating in the program. In the Yellowstone Battalion, under Leslie's leadership, the